

And I commend the thousands of volunteers from the Christian, Jewish, and Baha'i communities who, with their generosity of time and spirit, have made the Network work.

So often, we look around at the problems overwhelming our cities and despair that nothing can be done. In contrast, the Interfaith Shelter Network is an example of how people can make a positive difference in their communities.

REV. BILLY GRAHAM: A SOCIETY POISED ON THE BRINK OF SELF-DESTRUCTION

HON. ROBERT K. DORNAN

OF CALIFORNIA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Tuesday, May 14, 1996

Mr. DORNAN. Mr. Speaker, I commend to you and our colleagues the following transcript from the marvelous speech by the Rev. Billy Graham delivered in a jam-packed rotunda on May 2, 1996. I urge everyone to heed its words.

THE HOPE FOR AMERICA
(By Dr. Billy Graham)

Mr. Vice President; Speaker Newt Gingrich; Majority Leader Bob Dole; Senator Strom Thurmond; Members of the House of Representatives and the Senate; distinguished guests and friends.

Ruth and I are overwhelmed by the very kind words that have been spoken today, and especially by the high honor you have just bestowed on both of us. It will always be one of the high points of our lives, and we thank you from the bottom of our hearts for this unforgettable event. We are grateful for all of you in the Senate and House who have had a part in it; and President Clinton for his support in signing the resolution.

As we read the list of distinguished Americans who have received the Congressional Gold Medal in the past—beginning with George Washington in 1776—we know we do not belong in the same company with them, and we feel very unworthy. One reason is because we both know this honor ought to be shared with those who have helped us over the years—some of whom are here today. As a young boy I remember gazing at that famous painting of Washington crossing the Delaware. Only later did it occur to me that Washington did not get across that river by himself. He had the help of others—and that has been true of us as well. Our ministry has been a team effort, and without our associates and our family we never could have accomplished anything.

I am especially grateful my wife Ruth and I are both being given this honor. No one has sacrificed more than Ruth has, or been more dedicated to God's calling for the two of us.

However, I would not be here today receiving this honor if it were not for an event that happened to me many years ago as a teenager on the outskirts of Charlotte, North Carolina. An evangelist came through our town for a series of meetings. I came face-to-face with the fact that God loved me, Billy Graham, and had sent His Son to die for my sin. He told how Jesus rose from the dead to give us hope of eternal life.

I never forgot a verse of Scripture that was quoted. "As many as received him, to them gave he power to become the sons of God, even to them that believe on his name" (*John 1:12, KJV*). That meant that I must respond to God's offer of mercy and forgiveness. I had to repent of my own sins and receive Jesus Christ by faith.

When the preacher asked people to surrender their lives to Christ, I responded. I had little or no emotion; I was embarrassed to stand with a number of other people when I knew some of my school peers saw me; but I meant it. And that simple repentance and open commitment to Jesus Christ changed my life. If we have accomplished anything at all in life since then, however, it has only been because of the grace and mercy of God.

As Ruth and I receive this award we know that some day we will lay it at the feet of the One we seek to serve.

As most of you know, the President has issued a proclamation for this day, May 2, 1996, to be a National Day of Prayer. Here in Washington you will see and hear of people throughout the District of Columbia praying today. It is encouraging and thrilling that here, and across the country people have committed themselves to pray today for our leaders, our nation, our world, and for ourselves as individuals. I am so glad that before business each morning, both the House of Representatives and the Senate have a prayer led by Chaplain Ogilvie of the Senate, who has had so much to do with this event today, and Chaplain Jim Ford, who used to be chaplain at West Point when I went almost every year to bring a message to the cadets.

Exactly 218 years ago today—on May 2, 1778—the first recipient of this award, George Washington, issued a General order to the American people. He said, "The . . . instances of Providential Goodness which we have experienced and have now almost crowned our labors with complete success demand from us . . . the warmest returns of Gratitude and Piety to the Supreme Authority of all Good." It was a message of hope and trust, and it also was a challenge for the people to turn to God in repentance and faith.

We are standing at a similar point in our history as less than four years from now the world will enter the Third Millennium. What will it hold for us? Will it be a new era of unprecedented peace and prosperity? Or will it be a continuation of our descent into new depths of crime, oppression sexual immorality, and evil?

Ironically, many people heralded the dawn of the 20th Century with optimism. The steady march of scientific and social progress, they believed would vanquish our social and economic problems. Some optimistic theologian even predicted the 20th Century would be "The Christian Century", as humanity followed Jesus' exhortation to love your neighbor as yourself. But no other century has been ravaged by such devastating wars, genocides and tyrannies. During this century we have witnessed the outer limits of human evil.

Our mood on the brink of the 21st Century is far more somber. Terms like "ethnic cleansing" "random violence" and "suicide bombing" have become part of our daily vocabulary.

Look at our own society. There is much, of course, that is good about America, and we thank God for our heritage of freedom and our abundant blessings. America has been a nation that has shown a global compassion that the rest of the world seemingly does not understand. After World War II because we had the Atom Bomb, we had the opportunity to rule the world, but America turned from that and instead helped rebuild the countries of our enemies.

Nevertheless, something has happened since those days and there is much about America that is no longer good. You know the problems as well as I do; racial and ethnic tensions that threaten to rip apart our cities and neighborhoods; crime and violence of epidemic proportions in most of our cities;

children taking weapons to school; broken families; poverty; drugs; teenage pregnancy; corruption; the list is almost endless. Would the first recipients of this award even recognize the society they sacrificed to establish? I fear not. We have confused liberty with license—and we are paying the awful price. We are a society poised on the brink of self-destruction.

But what is the real cause? We call conferences and consultations without end, frantically seeking solutions to all our problems; we engage in shuttle diplomacy; and yet in the long run little seems to change. Why is that? What is the problem? The real problem is within ourselves.

Almost three thousand years ago King David, the greatest king Israel ever had, sat under the stars and contemplated the reasons for the human dilemma. He listed three things that the world's greatest scientists and sociologists have not been able to solve, and it seems the more we know, and the greater our technology, the more difficulties we are in. In perhaps the best-known passage of the Old Testament, Psalm 23, he touches on the three greatest problems of the human race.

First, David said, is the problem of emptiness. David wrote: "The Lord is my shepherd; I shall not want." He was not talking just about physical want, but spiritual want.

I stood on the campus of one of our great universities some time ago, and I asked the Dean, "What is the greatest problem on your campus?" He replied in one word: "Emptiness." The human heart craves for meaning, and yet we live in a time of spiritual emptiness that haunts millions.

"Nirvana" is the Hindu word for someone who has arrived into the state of perpetual bliss. Media reports said that Kurt Cobain, the NIRVANA rock group's leader, was the pacesetter for the nineties, and the "savior of rock and roll." But he said the song in the end which best described his state of mind was "I hate myself and I want to die!" And at age 27 he committed suicide with a gun.

Second, is the problem of guilt. David wrote: "He restoreth my soul, he leadeth me in the paths of righteousness." Down inside we all know that we have not measured up even to our own standards, let alone God's standard.

Third, David pointed to the problem of death. "Yea, though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil: for thou art with me." Death is the one common reality of all human life. Secretary of Commerce Ron Brown did not realize his time had come when he stepped on that plane in Croatia a few weeks ago.

From time to time I have wandered through Statuary Hall and looked at all those statues of some of the greatest men and women in our nation's history. But one thing is true of every one of them: They are all dead.

Yes, these three things—emptiness, guilt, and the fear of death—haunt our souls. We frantically seek to drown out their voices, driving ourselves into all sorts of activities—from sex to drugs or tranquilizers—and yet they are still there.

But we must probe deeper. Why is the human heart this way? The reason is because we are alienated from our Creator. That was the answer David found to these three problems: "The Lord is my shepherd." This is why I believe the fundamental crisis of our time is a crisis of the spirit. We have lost sight of the moral and spiritual principles on which this nation was established—principles drawn largely from the Judeo-Christian tradition as found in the Bible.

What is the cure? Is there any hope?

Ruth and I have devoted our lives to the deep conviction that the answer is yes. There

is hope! Our lives can be changed, and our world can be changed. The Scripture says, "You must be born again." You could have a spiritual rebirth right here today.

What must be done? Let me briefly suggest three things.

First, we must repent. In the depths of the American Civil War, Abraham Lincoln called for special days of public repentance and prayer. Our need for repentance is no less today. What does repentance mean? Repentance means to change our thinking and our way of living. It means to turn from our sins and to commit ourselves to God and His will. Over 2700 years ago the Old Testament prophet Isaiah declared: "Seek the Lord while he may be found: call on him while he is near. Let the wicked forsake his way, and the evil man his thoughts. Let him turn to the Lord, and he will have mercy on him, and to our God, for he will freely pardon" (Isaiah 55:6-7, NIV). Those words are as true today as they were over two and a half millennia ago.

Second, we must commit our lives to God, and to the moral and spiritual truths that have made this nation great. Think how different our nation would be if we sought to follow the simple and yet profound injunctions of the Ten Commandments and the Sermon on the Mount. But we must respond to God, Who is offering us forgiveness, mercy, supernatural help, and the power to change.

Third, our commitment must be translated into action—in our homes, in our neighborhoods, and in our society.

Jesus taught there are only two roads in life. One is the broad road that is easy and well-traveled, but which leads to destruction. The other, He said, is the narrow road of truth and faith that at times is hard and lonely, but which leads to life and salvation.

As we face a new millennium, I believe America has gone a long way down the wrong road. We must turn around and go back and change roads. If ever we needed God's help, it is now. If ever we needed spiritual renewal, it is now. And it can begin today in each one of our lives, as we repent before God and yield ourselves to Him and His Word.

What are YOU going to do?

The other day I heard the story of a high school principal who held an assembly for graduating seniors, inviting a recruiter from each branch of the service: Army, Navy, Air Force, Marines to each give a twelve minutes presentation on career opportunities they offered to the students. He stressed the importance of each staying within their allocated time.

The Army representative went first, and was so eloquent that he got a standing ovation, but went eighteen minutes. Not to be outdone, the Navy presentation was equally superb, but took nineteen minutes. Air Force then gave a sterling presentation, which lasted twenty minutes. By now, the principal was irate, and admonished the Marine recruiter that he had only three minutes before the students had to leave for the next class!

During the first two minutes of his shortened time, the Marine didn't say a word, but individually and carefully studied the faces of each student. Finally, he said, "I've looked across this crowd and I see three or four individuals who have what it takes to be a United States Marine. If you think you are one of them, I want to see you down front immediately after the assembly."

Who do you think drew the biggest crowd!

This afternoon, as I look out across this distinguished group gathered here, I see

more than a few men and women who have what it takes, under God to lead our country forward "through the night" into the next millenium—individuals who represent civic and governmental authority—as well as doctors, lawyers, clergy, artists and media.

Again, Ruth and I are deeply humbled by this award, and we thank you for all that it represents.

We pledge to continue the work that God has called us to do as long as we live.

Thank you.

HONORING THE FLYNN'S LICK VOLUNTEER FIRE DEPARTMENT

HON. BART GORDON

OF TENNESSEE

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Tuesday, May 14, 1996

Mr. GORDON. Mr. Speaker, I am taking this opportunity to applaud the invaluable services provided by the Flynn's Lick Volunteer Fire Department. These brave, civic-minded people give freely of their time so that we may all feel safer at night.

Few realize the depth of training and hard work that goes into being a volunteer firefighter. To quote one of my local volunteers, "These firemen must have an overwhelming desire to do for others while expecting nothing in return."

Preparation includes twice-monthly training programs in which they have live drills, study the latest videos featuring the latest in fire-fighting tactics, as well as attend seminars where they can obtain the knowledge they need to save lives. Within a year of becoming a volunteer firefighter, most attend the Tennessee fire training school in Murfreesboro where they undergo further, intensified training.

When the residents of my district go to bed at night, they know that should disaster strike and their home catch fire, well-trained and qualified volunteer fire departments are ready and willing to give so graciously and generously of themselves. This peace of mind should not be taken for granted.

By selflessly giving of themselves, they ensure a safer future for us all. We owe these volunteer fire departments a debt of gratitude for their service and sacrifice.

IN CELEBRATION OF NFPA'S CENTENNIAL

HON. CURT WELDON

OF PENNSYLVANIA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Tuesday, May 14, 1996

Mr. WELDON of Pennsylvania. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to pay tribute to the National Fire Protection Association [NFPA] as it celebrates its 100th anniversary. Organized in 1896, the NFPA is an international nonprofit organization with headquarters in Quincy, MA. Over 68,000 members and 300 employees are dedicated to helping all Americans reduce the burden of fire on the quality of life by advocating scientifically based consensus codes and standards, research and education for fire and related safety issues.

The NFPA's national consensus codes and standards are respected worldwide. Over 5,300 individuals serve voluntarily on technical committees that develop over 300 safety codes and standards which are widely adopted and enforced throughout the land. Among the most widely used codes are the "National Electric Code," the "Life Safety Code," the "Flammable and Combustible Liquids Code," the "Standard for the Installation of Sprinkler Systems," the "Standard for the Storage and Handling of Liquefied Petroleum Gases," "National Fire Alarm Code," and the "Standard for Health Care Facilities." These documents, when adopted by Federal, State, or local government make our daily lives safer. From the buildings we live in to the training of the firefighters who dedicate themselves to protecting lives and preserving property, the NFPA has been the leader in advocating fire safety throughout its 100 years.

NFPA presents its public education programs about fire safety in a positive, non-threatening manner to children. The "Learn Not to Burn [LNTB]" curriculum stresses how to prevent fires and teaches basic fire safety behavior. This successful program is used by schools in all 50 States and is credited with saving over 300 lives.

At the Eighth Annual Fire and Emergency Services Dinner on April 30, NFPA was honored with the Congressional Fire Services Institute's Partnership Award. This award recognizes NFPA's outstanding commitment to the fire service community and its many contributions to fire safety.

I would like to invite the U.S. Congress to join me in congratulating NFPA on this historic anniversary. As the association enters its second century, its dedicated membership will continue to make the United States a safe place for all Americans.

I urge my colleagues to join me in congratulating NFPA on its 100th anniversary.

ALICESON ROBINSON, LEGRAND SMITH SCHOLARSHIP WINNER

HON. NICK SMITH

OF MICHIGAN

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Tuesday, May 14, 1996

Mr. SMITH of Michigan. Mr. Speaker, let it be known that it is with great respect for the outstanding record of excellence she has compiled in academics, leadership, and community service, that I am proud to salute Aliceson Robinson, winner of the 1996 LeGrand Smith Scholarship. This award is made to young adults who have demonstrated that they are truly committed to playing important roles in our Nation's future.

As a winner of the LeGrand Smith Scholarship, Aliceson is being honored for demonstrating that same generosity of spirit, intelligence, responsible citizenship, and capacity for human service that distinguished the late LeGrand Smith of Somerset, MI.

Aliceson Robinson is an outstanding student at Homer High School and her high school